UNITED NATIONS **E**

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/ICEF/1994/L.7
1 March 1994

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND
Executive Board
1994 session

FOR INFORMATION

REPORT ON RESPONSES FROM UNICEF FIELD OFFICES TO THE MULTI-DONOR EVALUATION OF UNICEF INITIATED BY THE GOVERNMENTS OF AUSTRALIA, CANADA, DENMARK AND SWITZERLAND, AS CONTAINED IN THE 1993 UNICEF ANNUAL REPORTS

SUMMARY

The present report provides a summary of the comments made by UNICEF field offices on the report on the multi-donor evaluation of UNICEF initiated and carried out by the Governments of Australia, Canada, Denmark and Switzerland in 1991-1992, the executive summary of which may be found in E/ICEF/1993/CRP.7. Preliminary findings, trends and follow-up actions to the evaluation at the country level are identified.

The introduction to the present report is followed by an assessment of the initial effects of the evaluation report on country programme strategies. Implications for external cooperation with actors outside national Government and other United Nations agencies are then discussed. In addition, a summary of comments related to field office management issues in the context of the multi-donor evaluation of UNICEF is included.

CONTENTS

	Paragraphs	Page
INTRODUCTION	1 - 5	3
I. PROGRAMME STRATEGIES	6 - 21	4
A. General observations	6 - 7	4
B. The multi-donor evaluation of UNICEF country programming	8 - 11	4
C. Balance between the three basic interventions	12 - 13	5
D. Specific targeting within communities	14 - 15	6
E. Gender-responsive programming	16 - 19	6
F. Strategies for emergencies	20 - 21	7
II. EXTERNAL COOPERATION	22 - 29	8
A. Explicit strategies with actors outside national Governments	22 - 28	8
B. Collaboration with other United Nations agencies	29	9
III. MANAGEMENT	30 - 39	10
A. Intervention strategies in the context of changed situations	30 - 33	10
B. Field office management and structure	34 - 37	11
C. Methodologies for broad intervention strategies	38	11
D. Regional office and headquarters support	39	11
IV. CONCLUSION	40	12

INTRODUCTION

1. At its 1993 session, the Executive Board requested the Executive Director to prepare an analysis of responses received from those at the field level on experience gained from the multi-donor evaluation of UNICEF initiated by the Governments of Australia, Canada, Denmark and Switzerland and suggestions for further use to which elements of the evaluation might be put (E/ICEF/1993/14, decision 1993/6).

2. As a follow-up to decision 1993/6, the Executive Director issued an Executive Directive (CF/EXD/1993-007) on 1 June 1993, requesting action from UNICEF regional and field offices on several recommendations made in the evaluation.

3. The content of the present report is based on feedback provided in the 1993 annual reports on the issues raised by the report on the multi-donor evaluation of UNICEF. Even though there were only four months between the issuance of the Executive Directive on follow-up action required on the multi-donor evaluation of UNICEF and the preparation of the 1993 annual reports, 95 of the field offices have provided comments.

4. Since the evaluation placed importance on three broad intervention strategies, namely, support to the delivery of specific social services, capacity-building for sustained programme delivery and the empowerment of target group members, the responses have dealt with these strategies at length. Although these three intervention strategies cover most UNICEF programme activities, the evaluation recommended, where appropriate, more emphasis on capacity-building and empowerment. Responses on the mix of the three broad intervention strategies are set within this framework.

5. The present report is organized around issues of importance to field offices, including those issues related to programme strategies, external cooperation and management, since these are reflected in the responses to specific recommendations in the report on the evaluation. Although the present document reports on initial field office comments on the multi-donor evaluation, many aspects of the evaluation's impact on UNICEF which are not commented on in this report are discussed in other documents prepared for the 1994 Executive Board. For example, attention to the mix of strategic choices may be found in the country programme recommendations submitted to the present session. Along with the specific comments presented in the present document, many country programme recommendations contain references to collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), an area that requires continued emphasis. Likewise, the document on gender equality and empowerment of women and girls (E/ICEF/1994/L.5) reviews the questions of mainstreaming the girl child and gender-responsive programmes. Part II of the report of the Executive Director (E/ICEF/1994/2 (Part II)) reviews the status of UNICEF efforts to strengthen costing abilities in the organization, including attention to unit costing.

I. PROGRAMME STRATEGIES

A. General observations

6. Field offices in all regions expressed a preference for greater flexibility in the categorization of the broad intervention strategies by the addition of one or more categories, in accordance with specific conditions found in each country. In particular, some offices expressed the view that the strategy categories proposed in the evaluation appeared to simplify programming realities in the field.

7. In attempts to adapt the recommendations of the evaluation on the three broad intervention strategies to national conditions, other strategic choices were added in some countries. In Côte d'Ivoire, for example, the existing country sectoral programmes were refined during a mid-term review, based on the following four strategies: service delivery; capacity-building; empowerment; and advocacy. It was noted that all four strategies were present in all UNICEF programming in Côte d'Ivoire and had already been taken into account in the preparation of the annual plans of action and discussed with government partners during the biannual review, which took place in July 1993. The fourth strategy, advocacy, was also identified by other UNICEF field offices, including the offices in Guinea-Bissau, Honduras and the Philippines. In the Philippines, in order to define programme needs more precisely, the three broad intervention strategies were expanded to include a number of other dimensions, such as advocacy and social mobilization, information infrastructure and programme organization and management.

B. The multi-donor evaluation of UNICEF country programming

8. Notwithstanding reservations, the practical value of the recommendations of the evaluation regarding the preparation of country programme recommendations was noted in virtually all of the 17 full country programme recommendations being presented to the Executive Board in 1994. Many of the short-duration country programme recommendations ("bridging" programmes) refer to the recommendations of the evaluation, namely, the mix of strategic choices made.

9. In areas of situation analysis and programme development and review, the 1993 annual reports demonstrate that the evaluation is beginning to serve as a reference against which to pose programme issues and delineate programme elements. As a framework for mid-term reviews, either completed or projected, the following offices have commented: Côte d'Ivoire, Honduras, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lesotho, the Sudan and Uganda. In addition, some 10 of the 95 field offices that responded have used the evaluation in the preparation of one or more of the following: master plan of operations; national plan of action; report on strategies and workplan for the achievement of the mid-decade goals; and the ongoing programme and strategy document.

10. Of particular interest is the experience in the use of the evaluation for programming and advocacy. For example, the evaluation:

(a) Provided guidelines for the prioritization of some crucial areas of the country programme;

(b) Provided relevant and appropriate measures for social programming and assisted in focusing on goals, defining objectives and designing activities;

(c) Offered a useful tool for reflection and advocacy for programme reorientation with the Government and other partners in development;

(d) Served as a frame of reference to transform the programme into a more action-oriented and integrated programme;

(e) Was strategic in reviewing the efficacy of existing programme initiatives.

11. A number of field offices described national conditions that illustrate the complexities of programming under the three broad intervention strategies, especially as the weight of programming shifts towards capacity-building at lower administrative/societal levels and the empowerment of communities and groups. Examples include the following:

(a) In moving from service delivery through capacity-building to empowerment, UNICEF-supported programmes are dealing with increasingly complex issues, including issues that are fundamental and structural and are related to the control of resources and power distribution in society;

(b) For future planning, a critical analysis of the potential options available for the formulation of the different strategies will need to be based on a more thorough understanding of the societal dynamics that exist to support or hinder choices in these options. In this context, it was noted that particular attention needed to be paid to the role of women in the development process and to the factors that influence their ability to cope with new and increased responsibility, and, in doing this, the evaluation was viewed as a useful reference in the planning process.

C. Balance between the three basic interventions

12. One recommendation of the evaluation report was that UNICEF representatives should review their current country programmes to establish a balance between the three basic intervention strategies, both overall and for key sector programmes. The importance of an integrated strategy framework as currently appropriate in the country context was pointed out in the annual reports both by offices employing that approach prior to the evaluation and by those who have recently begun to do so. In some cases it was noted that, although the services delivery strategy was a large part of the support that UNICEF provided to the Government, given the lack of national resources, the services delivery strategy was viewed as a necessary and essential accompaniment to the success of the other two strategies.

13. One field office noted that poor programme implementation, where it does exist, might result less from the need for material and services inputs than

from weaknesses in organization and management, for which strategy integration was required. Reinforcing this view, it was recognized in Mongolia that, despite large numbers of educated managers, the lack of specific essential skills along with limited exposure to new ideas and approaches has impaired the capacity to deliver services to a greater extent than has a shortage of material.

D. Specific targeting within communities

14. Targeting within communities in accordance with differences in gender, social class and access to resources was one of the actions recommended in the evaluation report. Empowerment at the community level was almost a universal supportive comment in the annual reports, especially when comments on gender-responsive programming linked to empowerment were taken into account. In the country strategy meeting for Botswana, for example, it was reported that the participants reached a consensus on how the programme should identify with and focus on the children, women and families that the programme existed to serve. It was stated that that emphasis would entail an approach focused more on specific groups and problems rather than on particular "sectors", as had been the case in the past.

15. Comments from Bhutan included the statement that empowering children and women to participate in meeting their basic needs and rights was the cornerstone of UNICEF assistance in that country, but that there was no one channel for achieving that objective, which obligated the office to employ a mix of interventions.

E. Gender-responsive programming

16. The comments in the 1993 annual reports on gender-responsive empowerment, a specific interest of the evaluation, provide evidence of improvement in this area. Typical of the comments are references made to the changes in law, institutions and methodological instruments for tracking the reality of the lives of women. Where Governments are adopting a more liberal policy on the role of women in development and national power, UNICEF is in a better position to take a favoured partner stance as policies are implemented. Where this is not the case, UNICEF must fall back on a more energetic advocacy role. Two examples of the former situation are noted below.

17. In Uganda, where there are already 42 women parliamentarians, a new government bill establishes women councils spanning from the grass-roots to the national level, potentially placing women in that country in a new national structure of power in relation to advocacy and decisions on issues important to women. It was reported that the Government was also formulating specific gender policies to address gender issues in all sectors for the advancement of women, and that the Ministry of Women in Development was preparing a strategic plan of action on those issues. Within this new environment, the UNICEF field office, in support of the government policy, has prepared a situation analysis with the objective of ensuring that the issue of mainstreaming gender issues is built

into the country programme. Special emphasis is proposed for the economic and legal empowerment of women.

18. In India, two constitutional amendments have set the stage for the devolution of power to village committees and local bodies in urban areas as a major step to enable community empowerment. One third of the membership of these community levels of administration is reserved for women in order to address further the concern for gender equality.

19. In support of growing sensitivity generally to the issue of gender equality, and along the lines of a need identified in the evaluation report for extensive training in gender analysis, there is a growing recognition in the field that UNICEF activities can benefit by staff training in gender-sensitive programming and in the culturally sensitive application of the women's empowerment framework. In this regard, several offices have formulated training programmes for staff on gender perspective and the UNICEF policy/strategy for women and girls. In 1993, the Development Programmes for Women Section at UNICEF headquarters trained more than 140 programme officers and 30 representatives in order to build capacity for gender-responsive programmes.

F. Strategies for emergencies

20. In one of the more difficult country programming areas, the response to emergencies, the report on the evaluation placed special emphasis on the need to clarify and combine the use of the three basic intervention strategies. However, the strongest expositions and arguments in the annual reports for priority to be given to service delivery strategies were made for those countries in which complex emergency situations prevail. It is clear that where unstable political and/or security conditions are life-threatening to the population, a special environment develops in which assistance is almost invariably likely to be focused on strategies for the provision of materials and services, none the less recognizing and taking into account the wider need for capacity-building and empowerment. In the case of Angola, the field office pointed out that the lack of national security and the need for crisis management must be taken into account in a complex emergency situation and that the delivery of basic humanitarian assistance takes precedence over the longer-term aspects of development. In certain extreme political circumstances, international organizations are formally forbidden to engage in relations with de facto Governments and must provide services through NGOs in lieu of assisting those Governments as well as in the implementation of capacity-building and empowerment strategies.

21. One of the consequences of civil strife, rebellion and war, as one field office noted, was the widespread exposure to high levels of psychological trauma, particularly among women and children. Because of the magnitude of the problem and the length of time it takes to heal trauma, one UNICEF field office in Africa formulated a mix of strategies that included the provision of counselling services to traumatized children and women and the establishment of a three-month certificate programme on war-trauma counselling. In another country, it was stated that the nature of emergencies was such that people have to be prepared and supported to cope with unexpected negative impacts on their

lives. Thus, in addition to survival, that field office also concentrated on psycho-social dimensions: play activities in camps; training in psycho-social trauma for teachers, health workers and other volunteers; education for conflict resolution; community-based rehabilitation; and distribution of school kits to all children in camps so that some degree of social normalcy could be simulated. One field office noted that it was possible to develop strategies and programmes in an emergency setting, although strategies and programmes would necessarily be different from those proposed for non-emergency settings.

II. EXTERNAL COOPERATION

A. Explicit strategies with actors outside national Governments

22. The report on the multi-donor evaluation of UNICEF called for the organization to be more explicit in the strategic decisions it made at country levels regarding its cooperation with actors outside the national Government. Cooperation with groups outside the national Government frequently focuses on capacity-building and empowerment. There are an encouraging number of countries in which this type of cooperation occurs. In Uganda, for example, all major components are already following a mix of strategies at subnational levels. In the health sector, where there are three major lines of action, a project has been established, for example, to strengthen the capacity of districts to analyse, plan and manage health services. One of the priorities of the project is the development of the capacity of elected health committees to fulfil committee functions. In Senegal, a focus on empowerment is particularly evident in one of the principal strategies of the country programme, in which one of the objectives of the strategy is the incorporation of community participation into all programme activities, above all in those involving local committees. One comment stated that empowerment must include and build upon capacity-building and service delivery so that it has an added dimension in the provision of opportunities for direct participation by communities and individuals in problem assessment, analysis and action, as well as in resource mobilization and decision-making on resource allocation and programme/project management.

23. In the view of one field office, empowerment of communities poses the biggest programme challenge, considering the many factors that influence it. Elements critical to this strategy are stated to be the establishment of decentralized systems that are not purely administrative; the reduction of illiteracy and increase in school attendance; and the creation of mechanisms and avenues for community expression that take into consideration local traditions but that adapt to the process of modernization, and which take place both horizontally within the community and vertically with government officials. In this programme, development at the subnational level is obviously essential.

24. As a long-standing policy, UNICEF has considered its relationship and cooperation with NGOs as a critical factor in its mission to reach communities and individuals. This has been reiterated by comments from the field in which cooperation with NGOs is described, especially in the context of the strategic choices approach, including capacity-building and empowerment, areas in which many NGOs are engaged. A number of cases of cooperation are cited. Only

typical cases are presented here because of the importance they have in two current areas of opportunity for cooperation, those involving emergencies and decentralization.

25. As a result of internal security problems of emergency proportions, many countries now have Governments that are not fully functional. In the worst of cases, there may be no single Government for the administration and implementation of social policy. Typically, the UNICEF programme has a strong emergency focus in which a closely linked working relationship with United Nations agencies and NGOs is invaluable and in which cooperation with NGOs has evolved necessarily as a more efficient and practical way of implementing programmes.

26. In one notable case, that of Afghanistan, a national Government reaching out to all corners of the country no longer exists. Accordingly, UNICEF has for years been working only at subnational levels, namely, with regional, provincial or town authorities or with communities in towns or the countryside, although outreach has been limited by security conditions. In some cases it has been possible to use NGOs for implementation.

27. Closely connected to this approach is the idea of UNICEF/NGO cooperation as a crucial component of government policies aimed at increasingly involving NGOs in the implementation of national social policy and programmes at decentralized levels. In Ecuador, cooperation with NGOs, particularly local ones, forms a major part of the UNICEF implementation strategy, a situation that has occurred at the specific request of the Government in its policy for the "modernization" and "downsizing" of Government through, in part, a greater involvement of NGOs in the implementation of social policy and programmes.

28. Even so, difficulties do arise in circumstances where NGOs have reservations about working with organizations such as UNICEF, which are considered to be too close to Government and are, therefore, suspect. In this context, it becomes difficult to bring NGOs into cooperative arrangements where they must, to some degree, work in line with government policies.

B. Collaboration with other United Nations agencies

29. Responses from the field offices on extensive collaboration with other United Nations agencies were also presented. This type of collaboration was quite varied, covering most areas of programme activity and a wide array of United Nations agencies. In terms of relationships with other United Nations agencies at the country level, there is complete agreement with the emphasis of the evaluation on cooperation with other agencies through increased policy and strategy coordination, as well as increased technical dialogue, building on the UNICEF comparative advantage at the country level. An example is the strong commitment of UNICEF, where Governments so request, to participate with other United Nations agencies in the preparation of country strategy notes as a means of coordinating United Nations agency social development efforts. The recognition in the evaluation that UNICEF must retain its clear accountability and autonomy in programming and operations in order to combine approaches and strategies in accordance with national needs and priorities is fully supported

by UNICEF field offices. There is agreement with the acknowledgement in the evaluation that an increase in programme integration and in financial integration among United Nations agencies at the country level could weaken UNICEF decentralized programme planning and implementation, limit its operational flexibility and undermine its capacity to be a strong advocate for women and children.

III. MANAGEMENT

A. Intervention strategies in the context of changed situations

30. One area of interest in the evaluation report involved to what degree changes in intervention strategies occur as a result of changing situations in a given country. This has particular relevance in countries in which a transition to a multi-party democracy is occurring and/or where government policy provides for the decentralization of responsibility to regional and local areas. In one such country, the field office noted that the capacity-building and empowerment strategies were particularly appropriate in the evolution of a multi-party democracy. And, in another country, the field office commented that the development of an integrated area-based approach focused on the community level was an important thrust of the new country programme, and that the programme was designed to take advantage of the commitment of the Government to the decentralization of socio-economic development planning and implementation. In fact, decentralization forms part of the strategy for rural development, in which the empowerment of individuals, communities and formal and informal structures is embedded.

31. In Uganda and Eritrea, the Governments have a policy for decentralization, a situation in which an opportunity is presented for supporting capacity-building for planning, management and accountability at subnational levels of administration and at community levels where grass-roots capacity-building and empowerment can be employed.

32. With respect to the political and administrative decentralization under way in Colombia, the UNICEF field office placed special emphasis on fortifying links with NGOs and other organizations for the implementation of projects at local and regional levels. It was noted that, as a field office approach, that linkage was gaining strength in concert with governmental counterparts.

33. Even where a programme/project in mid-stream is experiencing management difficulties, it may be essential to redesign programme elements and activities by the addition of capacity-building. This has occurred in Zambia, where, in the face of a flagging immunization coverage, it was necessary to revive the project by efforts aimed at the creation of a more autonomous operational capacity in each target district. Also, in another country, changed political circumstances were identified by the field office as responsible for a current crisis impinging on the implementation of a previous empowerment strategy. As a consequence, new strategies for empowerment are being devised.

B. Field office management and structure

34. A number of comments have been noted on the consequences for management in the field offices of an increased emphasis on the capacity-building and empowerment intervention strategies. The point was made that the systematic strengthening of capacity-building and empowerment approaches in the programming process had created a realization that new office management procedures and staffing structures might be required.

35. The UNICEF office in Lesotho summed up the above-mentioned change by stating that the consequences of introducing the strategic choices approach as an integrated whole should be reflected in a new country programme management plan, most particularly, in the staffing pattern and the structure of inter-staff relationships. The office also felt that more effort and time would have to be devoted by the staff at district and community levels to planning and monitoring purposes. As for projects involving participatory inputs, the UNICEF field office for the West Bank and Gaza expressed the view that there would be a need for more extensive management in the field office, and that a special planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation structure for linking with UNICEF partners would be required. The UNICEF field office in Ghana identified the need to use participatory and empowering methodologies in planning exercises, training workshops, evaluations, etc., so that the participants would be able to incorporate those methodologies into their work.

36. On the level of actual reorganization, comments from the UNICEF field offices in Chile and Uruguay emphasized the fact that the evaluation had stimulated them to revise both programme practices and administrative routines.

37. Without question there are important differences in the size and degree of staff capacity in field offices, differences that potentially influence the capability of some offices to deal with complexities in the application of the three broad intervention strategies.

C. Methodologies for broad intervention strategies

38. Since the evaluation of capacity-building and empowerment programmes routinely involves methodologies dealing with social and individual behaviour in a difficult environment with respect to data, it is significant that a number of field offices have called for increased attention to monitoring and evaluation in the office and project settings. In this, the development of bottom-up monitoring tools was considered essential. The field office in Ghana placed particular emphasis on improving the frequency and quality of evaluations, with greater stress to be placed on using the results of such studies to adapt programmes continually in light of changing conditions.

D. Regional office and headquarters support

39. Faced with the requirement to strengthen the use of the strategic choices approach in country programming and implementation and in the related monitoring and evaluation activities, various field offices have called for increased

technical support from the regional offices and headquarters. Field offices recognize the importance of regional offices in strengthening field office capacities to make strategic choices and to manage evaluations better as an integral part of the country programme process, both of which are regional office support activities. It was pointed out in one case that help would be needed to assist field offices with the establishment of criteria for selecting strategies as well as to provide guidance on operationalizing capacity-building and empowerment strategies.

IV. CONCLUSION

40. The Executive Director is pleased to be able to provide this review of the initial implementation in field offices of the recommendations in the report on the multi-donor evaluation of UNICEF. In less than half a year, it is clear that the strategic choices framework for programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation has had a widespread and positive impact on field programming and activities. This impact is reflected further in documents presented to the present session of the Executive Board. As UNICEF continues to explore opportunities and undertake activities for the operational application of the strategic choices approach and other recommendations of the evaluation report, feedback to the Executive Board will continue to be provided through the normal reporting procedures.